

SUPERSTARS OF EDUCATION

YOU
VOTED!

In our 2005 survey, we asked you to name those you most admire in the world of education—and you didn't hesitate to share! We received votes for celebs, authors, and—over and over—your fellow teachers. That's when we picked up the phone to discover more about how your picks inspire you, and touch base with your nominees. Who's fighting for you, and what's on their minds? Here's what we learned.

By Caralee Adams

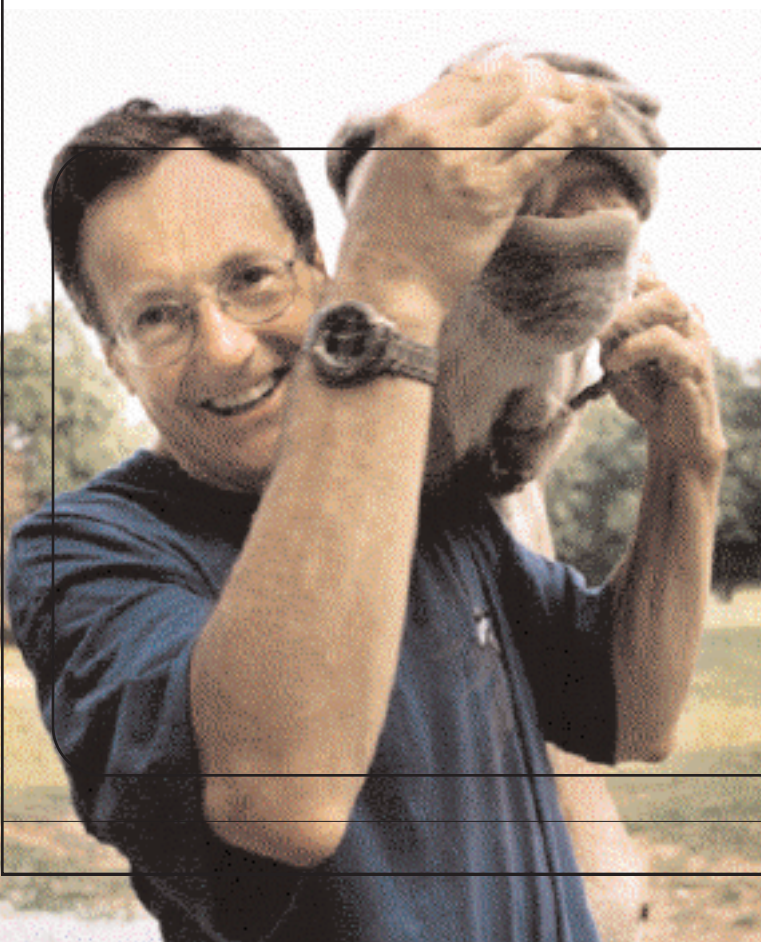
MEL LEVINE

■ **BEST KNOWN** for translating the latest research on learning differences from scientist-speak into a user-friendly format for teachers and families.

■ **WHAT YOU SAID:** "Dr. Levine opened my eyes to the fact that not every child with a learning issue warrants a red flag and a prescription. He's an inspiration to those who want to help our most desperate students." —CHRISTOPHER HEIM, FOURTH-GRADE TEACHER, ROCKVILLE, MD

■ **HIS PHILOSOPHY:** "One of the most important things a school can do is build on each individual's strengths," says Levine. "Sometimes we overlook the need to celebrate and respond to the many diverse talents that exist within the student body."

■ **HIS ADVICE TO YOU:** "Look beneath the surface when a child seems lazy or unmotivated. Recognize there is always an excellent reason, rather than condemning the child. Search for what else is going on."



■ **BEST KNOWN** as the supervising producer and host of “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” magazine founder, actress, and philanthropist.

■ **WHAT YOU SAID:** “Oprah not only supports education but educators as well...she’s said on her show that, next to parenting, teaching is the most challenging and honorable profession, because teachers have the power to shape lives and, oftentimes, they may be the only positive influence in a child’s life. On her Christmas show in 2004, she invited teachers all over the country to attend, and each one was presented with fun gifts totaling close to \$5,000 each!”

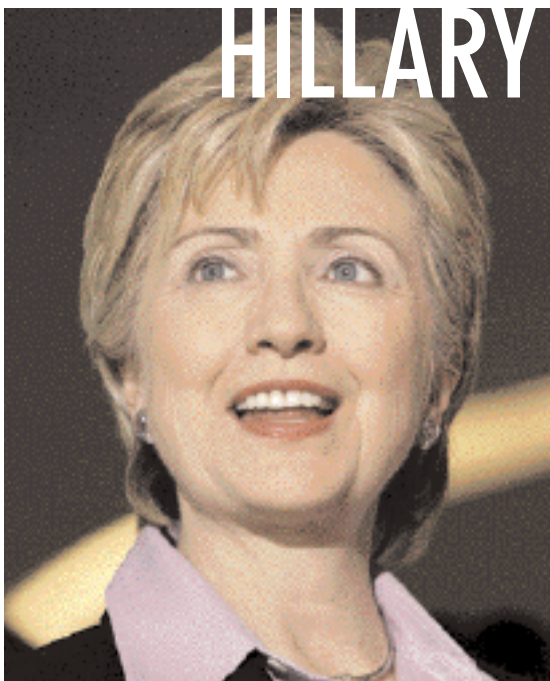
—ZANTHIA MADDOX-RIDLEY, KINDERGARTEN TEACHER, FAYETTEVILLE, GA

■ **HER PHILOSOPHY:** “Great teachers are a gift to the world. I love teachers. I think you’re the true leaders,” Oprah told an audience of teachers on her show. “When you’re a teacher these days, you get no respect and no pay. We’ve really got to do better, America.”

■ **WHY WE LOVE HER:** The Oprah Winfrey Foundation supports organizations that educate and empower women, children and families. Through Free the Children, Winfrey has helped build 48 schools in 12 countries. In January 2007, the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls will open in South Africa with 450 students in grades 7–12.

■ **WHOM SHE ADMIRES IN EDUCATION:** Mary Duncan, her fourth-grade teacher, who inspired her and helped her love learning.

■ **PRO-TEACHER PLATFORM:** Education is the door to freedom.



HILLARY CLINTON

■ **BEST KNOWN** for advocating for children as First Lady, U.S. Senator from New York, and First Lady of Arkansas.

■ **WHAT YOU SAID:** “Like every other well-known person, Hillary Clinton can do so much just by being affiliated with an organization. But she chooses to continuously recognize the problems we’re fighting in the education system. She brings awareness to issues and to people who would otherwise go unnoticed.”

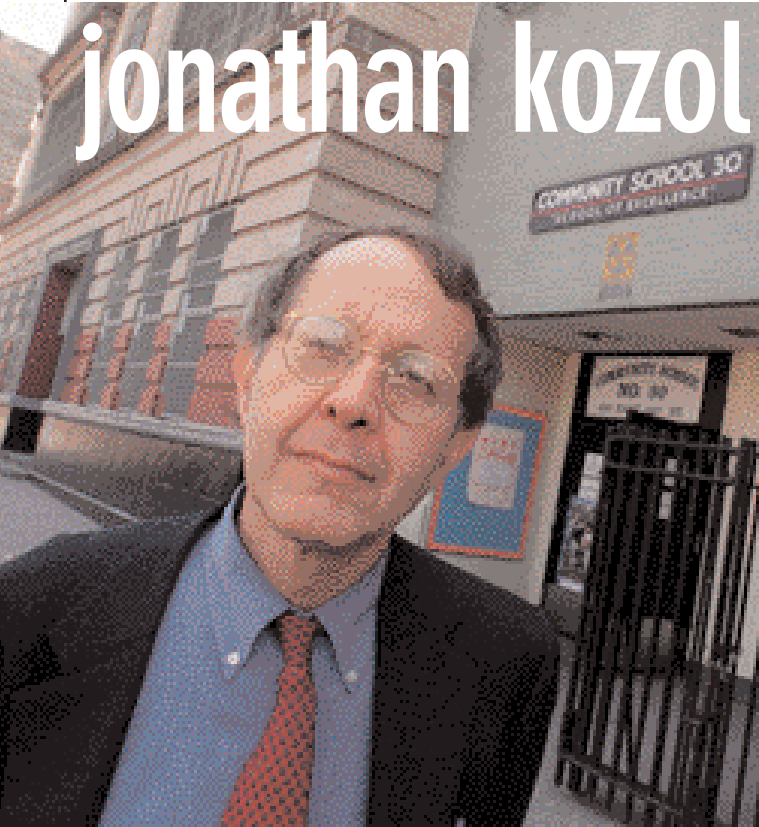
—KELLY CHAMBERS, FOURTH-GRADE TEACHER, ANDERSON, SC

■ **HER PHILOSOPHY:** In her 1996 book, *It Takes a Village*, Clinton spotlighted the need for a caring community of adults to raise children. “Even though our national rhetoric proclaims that children are our most important resource, we squander these precious lives as though they do not matter. Children’s issues are seen as “soft.” These issues are not soft. They are hard—the hardest issues we face. They are intimately connected to the very essence of who we are and who we will become,” she wrote.

■ **PRO-TEACHER PLATFORM:** Supports early childhood education, teacher training, smaller class size, and better access to college.

20 superstars of education

jonathan kozol



■ **BEST KNOWN AS** the author of award-winning books on race, poverty, and inequities in education, including *Death At An Early Age*, *Savage Inequalities*, and *Amazing Grace*.

■ **WHAT YOU SAID:** "Jonathan Kozol has been an inspiration to me since I began reading his books in college. He helped me to realize the many inequalities that exist in our public school systems across the U.S. His influence has guided me as I have chosen to teach in a succession of "bad" schools, and I have come to realize that the children in these schools need so much more than the educational bureaucracies will allow for. Kozol has motivated me to go far beyond where I ever thought I could, or ever would, in teaching."

—JAMES ROSE, SIXTH-GRADE TEACHER, BROOKLYN, NY

■ **HIS PHILOSOPHY:** "If there are amazing graces on this weary earth," he states, "I believe that they are these good children sent to us by God and not yet soiled by the knowledge that the nation does not love them. What I hope for is that there will be a renewed struggle in our society—the kind of change that is at once spiritual and political. It must involve young and old, rich and poor, black, Hispanic, and white—all ethnic groups, joined together in the kind of upheaval that shook this nation in the early 1960s."

■ **HIS ADVICE TO YOU:** "Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win."

MARILYN BURNS

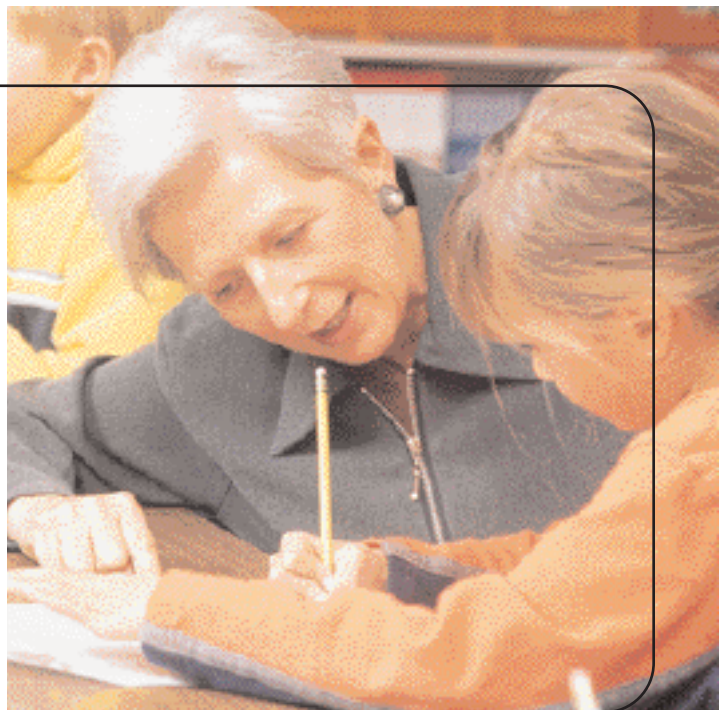
■ **BEST KNOWN** for helping teachers and kids look at math in a whole new light, by using concrete materials and relating math to real life. Burns is the founder of Math Solutions Professional Development.

■ **WHAT YOU SAID:** "For many of us, teaching math is scary. By using Marilyn's strategies, math becomes not only enjoyable for kids, but for the teacher as well. I've been using her strategies for years now and know that my students are learning more and having fun doing it."

—SYNDI LYON, THIRD-GRADE TEACHER, OCEANSIDE, CA

■ **HER PHILOSOPHY:** "Too often teachers ask questions and listen only for the right answer. Sometimes correct answers mask incorrect thinking. It's all about communication. That's how you bring math to life."

■ **HER ADVICE TO YOU:** "Be a lifelong learner. Learning brings new insights and ideas into our lives, and this spills over into what we do with children in the classroom."



ALFIE KOHN



■ **BEST KNOWN** as an outspoken critic of education's focus on testing and grades. He's the author of the new *Unconditional Parenting: Moving from Rewards and Punishments to Love and Reason*.

■ **WHAT YOU SAID:** "In today's world, I think it's important for students to see themselves as part of a classroom and school community so they will in turn see themselves as a part of their neighborhoods, town communities, and the world. Kohn's approach cultivates the young leaders of tomorrow."

—SHANNON WINDUS, THIRD-GRADE TEACHER, KINGSTON, RI

■ **HIS PHILOSOPHY:** "I'm afraid we are living through a dark time in American education where the emphasis is on forgettable facts and isolated skills rather than on deep understanding and the joy of curiosity," says Kohn. "The emphasis is on a top-down, corporate-style, test-driven approach to school reform that ignores real people in the classroom."

■ **PRO-TEACHER PLATFORM:** "I'm reassured whenever a teacher understands a test score does not capture a child's proficiency," says Kohn. "I'm gladdened when I see teachers speaking out rather than carrying out mandates that don't make sense."

laura bush

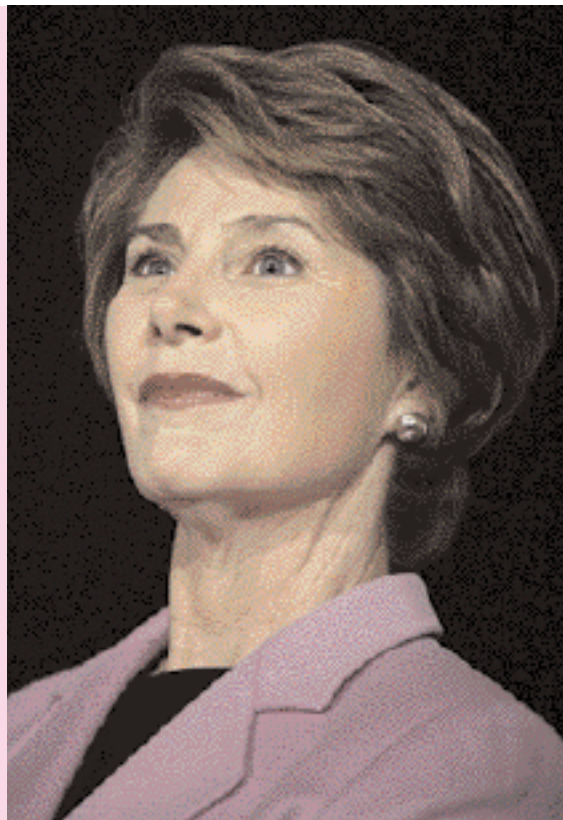
■ **BEST KNOWN** as First Lady and a former public school teacher and librarian with a passion for reading, early childhood development programs, and initiatives to promote the teaching profession.

■ **WHAT YOU SAID:** "I appreciate that our First Lady is a positive role model for girls and women. Mrs. Bush is an advocate for education and literacy worldwide. She focuses attention nationwide on recruiting college students, professionals from other fields, and retired military folks into the teaching profession. I hold Laura Bush in very high esteem as an educator and as a top-notch First Lady." —LAURA HAZEL, K-2 TEACHER, SALEM, OR

■ **HER PHILOSOPHY:** Mrs. Bush believes in the importance of equipping kids with reading skills they need to be successful in school. "Though many children grow up hearing a broad vocabulary and being read to from infancy, others enter school without knowing the names of letters or how to count. For these children, reading and learning can be a struggle. If they are unable to overcome this obstacle, their loss affects all of society," Mrs. Bush has said. At the White House, Mrs. Bush hosted a Summit on Early Childhood Cognitive Development, bringing scholars and educators together to discuss the best ways for parents and caregivers to prepare children for learning.

■ **PRO-TEACHER PLATFORM:** "Our challenge is to reach all children early so that every child starts school with the skills needed to learn."

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LUCY CALKINS

■ **BEST KNOWN** for helping bring reading and writing workshops to schools, districts, and cities. Calkins is a professor of curriculum and teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University, and author of many books including *The Art of Teaching Writing* and *The Art of Teaching Reading*.

■ **WHAT YOU SAID:** “We had the pleasure of having Lucy Calkins come to our school for a workshop with us. Many of my staff had read her books and were interested in her ideas for writing with children. I was most impressed when she described what went on in her classroom—what it would look like if I were to drop in one afternoon and what kids were actually doing. She had an ordinary classroom with ordinary kids and some extraordinary ideas for writing with kids. To me, her books can be used as a bible by the bedside—reading about and then implementing one idea at a time in a writers workshop format. I’ve been inspired by her in creating my writing program with my second graders.”

—PAM HERNANDEZ, SECOND-GRADE TEACHER, SANTA CRUZ, CA

■ **HER PHILOSOPHY:** “We need to invite and equip kids to participate in the rigorous work that readers and writers across the world do,” says Calkins. “I hope we can lift the level of instruction for everyone and provide the best literature and riches to students.”

■ **HER ADVICE TO YOU:** “Teachers underestimate their power. As a profession they need to speak out,” says Calkins. “For too long we’ve worked in isolation. We need to collaborate and we need to plan and reflect together. Bring down the walls that divide us as we form more communities.”

■ **WHOM SHE MOST ADMIRE IN EDUCATION:** Joel Klein (Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education); Carmen Farina (Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning in the New York City Department of Education); and Don Graves (author of books on writing and children, retired professor from the University of New Hampshire).

20 superstars of education

HARRY WONG

■ **BEST KNOWN** for being a new teacher advocate and one of the most sought-after speakers in education (he's booked two years in advance). His book (he co-wrote it with his wife, Rosemary), *The First Days of School*—a survival guide that offers pragmatic information for teachers—has sold 2.5 million copies.

■ **WHAT YOU SAID:** “Dr. Wong knows that education is so much more than a career. It is a calling. It's something that you choose to do even after you make a great deal of money and do not necessarily need the teaching gig anymore.”

—JUDI SAVALA-WRIGHT, 6-8 TEACHER, COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

■ **HIS PHILOSOPHY:** “There is absolutely no reason why 50 percent of all new teachers should be out of the profession within five years. School districts have the responsibility to produce effective teachers by implementing highly organized and comprehensive induction programs that flow into life-long professional development programs. When we teach our teachers well, then they will teach their students well.”

■ **PRO-TEACHER PLATFORM:** “In education, we isolate our teachers, new and veteran, and wonder why we make no progress. The success of a school is determined by how a family of teachers and administrators works together.” □

and 11 more superstars

1. MAYA ANGELOU, author, poet, and educator. She helped create the Maya Angelou National Institute for the Improvement of Child and Family Education at Winston-Salem State University, School of Education.

2. RON CLARK, teacher, author, lecturer. His 2003 book, *The Essential 55*, was a *New York Times* bestseller, and his inspirational, motivational quotes have been featured on recent *Instructor* posters.

3. MARVA COLLINS, founder of the Westside Preparatory School in Chicago. Known for her high standards and a back-to-the basics approach, Collins gained notoriety when she appeared on “60 Minutes.”

4. BILL COSBY, entertainer. Best known as the creator of “The Cosby Show,” Cosby also holds a doctorate in education. He

has been a longstanding advocate for kids, teachers, and schools.

5. DIANNE FEINSTEIN, U.S. Senator from California. Feinstein has been a supporter of the Head Start program and increased funding for No Child Left Behind, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, and Title I.

6. HOWARD GARDNER, professor and author. Gardner is best known for his theory of multiple intelligences. His latest book is *Changing Minds* (Harvard Business School Press, 2004).

7. BILL NYE, scientist, comedian, and author. With his wacky humor, Nye has turned kids onto science with his Emmy-winning, half-hour television series, “Bill Nye the Science Guy.” He's written five books, including *The Science Guy's Big Blast of Science*, an introductory science text.

8. ESMÉ RAJI CODELL, teacher and author. Codell wrote the hugely popular *Educating Esmé: Diary of a Teacher's First Year* (among

several other titles), filled with hip, funny, and raw stories of her experiences as a first-year teacher.

9. LAURA ROBB, teacher and author. Robb is the director of language arts and curriculum coordinator for Powhatan School in Boyce, Virginia. She has written *Teaching Reading in Middle School* (Scholastic Professional Books), among other titles.

10. REGIE ROUTMAN, teacher and author. Routman conducts workshops on whole school change. While her books are packed with research on language learning, teachers appreciate her encouraging tone and practical ideas.

11. YOU (AND YOUR COLLEAGUES)! Many of you said you were most inspired by ordinary teachers. Reader Courtney Shaw: “I have learned more from my peers than I ever did in a classroom. I am very thankful to have come across outstanding teachers in my career. Their passion and dedication make a difference.”

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